

Beam Me Up, Missouri

DTTP Bridges 5000-Mile Gap To Unite Families

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS, MO – It used to be that a long-distance telephone call was "the next best thing to being there." On the day of his graduation, Excelsior Springs high-school senior David Yadon and his family found something even better.

When he crossed the stage to accept his diploma, Yadon did so under the beaming eyes of his father, who, paradoxically, was at that time more than 5,000 miles – and seven time zones – away at Eagle Base in Bosnia. Master Sgt. Michael Yadon, serving with Stabilization Force 13 in Bosnia, was "transported" to his son's high-school auditorium through the courtesy of the Missouri Army National Guard (MoARNG) and its Distributive Training Technology Project (DTTP) video technology.

Missouri has deployed approximately 2,200 National Guardsmen and -women since March 2003. To unite these soldiers with their families back home, the National Guard facility in Jefferson City, MO, conducts more than three video-teleconferences (VTCs) each week. In addition to the Yadon high-school graduation, MOARNG has used its communications technologies to support such diverse activities as a July 4 cookout that included US families and their loved ones in Bosnia, and, most recently, the Engineers Ball at Fort Loenardwood, MO, which was broadcast to a battalion of engineers stationed in Iraq.

Reaction to these activities – from deployed soldiers and their families alike – has been overwhelming. Lt. Col. Thomas A. Smith, Director of Information Management for the Missouri National Guard, noted that "video-teleconferencing is more challenging to provide in rural areas, but if you've ever witnessed a family-oriented video conference, this service is remarkably emotional and gratifying."

Morale building aside, he said, Missouri is pushing the technological envelope by helping make the NGB "Anytime, Anywhere" training goal a reality. Using the DTTP equipment and infrastructure as a foundation, Missouri has leveraged the state infrastructure, commercial networks, and portable equipment to increase the system's flexibility dramatically. "With each VTC," Smith said, particularly those involving portable equipment and remote locations, we're demonstrating our ability to connect people no matter where they are. The implications for command and control are clear."

For more information about the project, please contact DTTP Business Operations at DTTP.Busops@ngbcio.ngb.army.mil.

